

Hi, I'm Joe. I worked at The Mid Hants Railway between the years 2013 and 2018 and this is the story of my time there.

I've been interested in railways for years. Ever since I was young. My grandfather had a model railway of his own, which motivated me to get one for myself. Back in 2012 (When I was 11) I visited the Mid Hants Railway for the first time with a couple of friends who had been before. I spent all day travelling on the line and became fascinated with the way things worked. No more than one day later, I was on the internet searching voluntary positions at The Watercress Line. At this point, you could become a "Young Volunteer" at the age of just 12! Which for me was fantastic. I waited a few months for my 12th birthday to come around, and in the start of 2013 I started.

I most enjoyed the people I got to meet, and the experiences I had. I did so many things, for example shovelling ash in Ropley Yard, going on to dispatching trains at Alresford. I was also very lucky as I got to try my hand at signalling, shunting, and guarding.



I loved the atmosphere whilst working, the sounds, smell, and sight of locomotives in their former glory is just something that can't be replicated without having the real thing. I also got to meet lots of people, young and old. And I gained lots of experience from them, as well as hearing the odd story from years ago.

Working at the railway helped me learn how to work as a team. Being young, "teamwork" used to just be something I did at school when there was a group activity. At the railway however, I felt like I played a big part in something fantastic. Being part of such a large team was one of the best parts of my time at the watercress line. It also helped me build my confidence up. Using the announcement systems, and the odd customer service moment, really helped.

The railway didn't just teach me things about the running of railways however, it helped me learn things about engineering, business, and even Maths! From a young age, I've always wanted to be a mechanical engineer, and 5 years at the railway gave me so much experience, that it's left me with a really good start in the industry.



Even though I have always had a fascination with trains, it wasn't just them that made the railway such a lovely place to work and be around, It was also my colleagues and the general public. I found after only a month of working at Alresford, that you can gain so much by talking to people. And that it's the Volunteers and the public that really make a railway.



I remember on my fourth shift, after having only doing one or two train dispatches, and taken a step back for few shifts just to learn the ropes, I was asked to make an announcement at Alresford. I played it over and over in my head for over an hour, revising the words I would say and what I needed to tell the passengers, However instead of reading out "Ropley, Medstead & Four Marks and Alton" As I was supposed to, I was so anxious of making a mistake I simply muttered the word "Ropley" and forgot about the rest. But thankfully someone was close by to help me finish it.

That was what was so great about the job. There was never a "silly question" and everyone was always willing to help you out in some way or another. The 5 years I spent at The Watercress Line Between 2013 and 2018 Has left me with the experience, skills, and confidence I needed to move on as I grew up, and I couldn't be more thankful to the people that I worked alongside who made it so brilliant.

I would 100% Recommend the young operator scheme there, as It did so much for me and I hope this convinces anyone reading, who hasn't already looked into it, to do so!

